

TANGMERE, MORNING: Having taxied to the leeward end of the runway, the defending Meteors are refuelled prior to awaiting the order to scramble.

to scramble; two Very flares curved into the sky from the control tower and the Tangmere part of the operation was "on." We, in the control tower, were able to listen in to the R/T instructions from G.C.I. to the Red (Tangmere) force, but reception was absolutely shocking.

Climbing on a given vector of 240 deg, the Meteors were sent up to 14,000ft, which Red leader reported attaining 2 min 20 sec after take-off. Unfortunately, as we have already pointed out, the R/T gibberish was punctuated with sanity so infrequently that it was difficult to follow precisely what the Meteors were doing, but the accuracy of what we were able to understand was confirmed by

the remarks of Red leader when he got back to base, a somewhat irritated aviator.

Put concisely, the Tangmere force were taken to 14,000ft on a course which sent them S.W. of the Isle of Wight and were then given a series of vectors by Control, finally to be told that the attacking force were in such-and-such a position; however, despite excellent visibility, the Meteor pilots were unable to see the Naval squadrons. Then, some little time later, when, after a further period of chasing about, Red leader did see the attackers, and wanted to engage, his force was controlled off, and the Vampires from Odiham appeared on the scene and attacked. By the time the Meteors were able once more to make an engagement, the enemy had crossed the Selsey line into the "safe" area, and the interception was scrubbed.

Control Faultiness

It would seem that Sector Control were at fault (a) in telling the Red force that the enemy were somewhere where they were not, and (b) in not permitting the Meteors to make an attack until too late.

Exercises of this kind, if they show up rustiness in the organization, are of great value from this aspect alone, but on the basis of our wartime experience of G.C.I. and fighter defence, one would have imagined that the whole system must have attained something near perfection, and we cannot assess it as anything but pitiable that such a rolliness as was apparent during this exercise could exist.



After lunch at Tangmere, we motored the few miles over to Ford, prepared to cover phase 2 of the day's work from the Naval side. This, unfortunately, proved to be impossible, as the Navy were operating on their own frequencies and could not cover the R.A.F. side of the work.

The Navy were brisk and efficient, and we understood from the Commander (Air) that the Naval side of the operations were simulations of attacks from ship-borne forces. That is to say, the aircraft attacking Ford in the morning were taken as having originated from carriers and, likewise, the afternoon's return attack on St. Merryn was to be similarly conceived.

Take-off from Ford was scheduled for 15.20 hours and the aircraft congregated at the end of the runway to take up stacked line positions for simulation of deck take-off. First away were the Sea Hornets taking off in alternate pairs and respectively swerving to port and starboard into their initial climb. The 20 m.p.h. wind out of the south-south-west was about 60 deg off the runway and this, coupled with slipstream turmoil from preceding aircraft, made some of the following machine swerve rather widely. Following the Sea Hornets came the Firebrands, the lumbering take-off of which was in marked contrast to the neat celerity of the Seafires which were closely pursued by the Fireflies. All forty-four aircraft were airborne in 14 minutes. The various sections formed up and, all heading on different courses, vanished into the mild afternoon sky.



FORD, AFTERNOON: Seafire 47s of No. 14 C.A.G. sitting, slim, ready and eager for instructions to leave.